सरकारों की संयुक्त जिम्मेवारी मानी गई है। भूतपूर्व सैनिकों के पुनर्वास एवं कल्याण के लिए केन्द्र एवं राज्य सरकारों के पास कई योजनाएं हैं जैसे केन्द्र एवं राज्य सरकारों तथा उनके सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के उपक्रमों/ राष्ट्रीय-कृत बैंकों की नौकरियों में आरक्षण देना, स्वरोजगार योजनाएं, प्रतियोगी परीक्षाओं के वास्ते आयु सीमा एवं शैक्षणिक योग्यता में छूट देना, सिविल में नौकरियों के लिए उन्हें तैयार करने हेतु प्रशिक्षण देना, चिकित्सा सुविधाएं, कैंटीन सुविधाएं, वीरता पुरस्कार विजेताओं एवं युद्ध में शहीद हुए सैनिकों की पत्नियों को यात्रा रियायतें देना, युद्ध के कारण असहाय हुए सैनिकों तथा युद्ध अथवा युद्ध जैसी कार्रवाई में शारीरिक रूप से अशक्त हो गए कार्मिकों की संतानों को शैक्षिक रियायत देना आदि।

2. भूतपूर्व सैनिकों की कल्याण संबंधी योजनाओं का वित्त पोषण सशस्त्र सेना झंडा दिवस की निधि, जिसका हिसाब-हिसाब केन्द्र सरकार रखती है तथा राज्य सरकारों के कल्याण निधियों से किया जाता है। गुजरात की राज्य सरकार भूतपूर्व सैनिकों के कल्याण के लिए एकीकृत निधि, दातव्य निधि तथा जवान कल्याण निधि रख रही है।

3. भूतपूर्व सैनिकों को मुहैया कराई जाने वाली सुविधाओं और रियायतों की समीक्षा समय-समय पर केन्द्रीय सैनिक बोर्ड तथा राज्य सैनिक बोर्डों की बैठकों में की जाती है।

State-wise distribution of vacancies

1527. SHRI V.P. DURAISAMY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any proposal to change the present system of distribution of vacancies in Defence Services State-wise, in proportion to the population of States; and

(b) if so, whether all the political parties and Chief Ministers have been consulted in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Reservation for SCs/STs/OBCs

1528. SHRI V.P. DURAISAMY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering providing reservation to SCs/STs and OBCs in the Defence services; and

(b) if so, by when it is likely to be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Voting right of Defence personnel

1529. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that most of the 18 lakh army soldiers and officers are deprived of their political right to cast their vote during general elections, but for the efficacy of the postal ballot system; and

(b) if so, whether the Chief of Army staff has suggested proxy voting for the army-personnel; and

(c) if so, the Government's decision thereon?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) A proposal for introducing the system of proxy voting for the defence personnel and the adult members of their families living with them, is under the consideration of the Government.

War-vessels of Indian Navy

1530. SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that only five large warships, out of 18 war vessels in Indian Navy, are in operational state today; if not, what is the present status;

(b) whether the Navy is adequately prepared to meet the grim threat perception so repeatedly pointed out by him; and

(c) what steps are proposed to ensure optimum operational worthiness and the time schedule fixed for the same?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) 2/3rd of the Navy warships are normally kept in operational readiness to permit maintenance to be undertaken. However, the Navy has contingency plans to accelerate maintenance so as to have more ships available should the need arise. Navy is adequately prepared to meet any threat.

Army for internal disturbances

1531. SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Army is being overused for internal threats;

(b) if so, whether reaction has been expressed on this issue by the Chief of the Army Staff; and

(c) how many times the army has been used for internal security and tackling insurgency during the last two years?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Since the end of the decade of the eighties, the deployment of the Army on counter insurgency duties has increased substantially due to the situation prevailing in J&K and some North Eastern States.

(b) The Chief of the Army Staff has expressed concern in this regard.

(c) Units of the Army/Assam Rifles/ Rastriya Rifles have remained deployed for counter insurgency operations in the states of J&K, Assam, Nagaland and Manipur during the last 2 years on a regular basis. Some units have also been deployed in Tripura. In addition, the Army was called out for maintenance of law and order on 5 occasions in 1996, 2 in 1997 and 1 in 1998 in other States.

POWs of 1971 War

1532. SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that 60 armed forces personnel taken as prisoners of war in 1971 Indo-Pak war, are still languishing in Pakistan's prisons;

(b) if so, the reasons for delay in the repatriation of these personnel and what has been the result of our efforts; so far; and

(c) whether Government are proposing to take up the matter at the political level to resolve this humane problem so that mental torture of families of these personnel could come to an end?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) As per information available, which has been compiled on the basis of various representations received from the family members of the missing defence personnel including representation from Missing Defence Personnel Relatives Association, there appear to be 54 defence personnel as prisoners of war in the custody of Pakistani authorities. As the nodal Ministry for this subject is the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), this Ministry has been requesting MEA to raise the issue at the highest level with Pakistani authorities. MEA, from time to time, had been raising the issue at the Prime Ministerial level and also during the Foreign Secretary level talks. The matter was last raised by the Prime Minister in Male with the Pak Prime Minister in May 1997. Pakistan has, however, been consistently maintaining that there are no prisoners of war in their custody.

The official position in this case is that all the missing defence personnel of 65 and 71 wars, after lapse of 7 years, have